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William C. Nelson to Maria C. Nelson (21 June 1861)

William Cowper Nelson

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Dove Hole, Camp Magnolia, near Pensacola,
Escambia County, Florida, June 21st,

My Darling Mother;

As Mr Arthur leaves to-morrow morning for H. S. I will endeavor to write you a few lines, although I have nothing interesting to communicate. Knowing that you will be disappointed, if you do not receive a letter from your little boy, by every one who comes from Pensacola, you have not yet acknowledged the receipt of the ambrotypes and letter, sent by Lieut. Balfour. I hope you have received them.

Yesterday the 4 companies who now constitute our detachment, were marched down to Col. Strong, to drill for the edification of Mrs. Col. Chalmers, the boys who went, said they had a mighty rough time of it, and complained bitterly against the Col. for what they called a useless exhibition of authority. For once I was in luck being a supernumerary to the guard on that day, and consequently exempt from all other duty. For there is a military axiom, that no soldier, can do more than one duty at a time.

To day I have been on regular guard duty, but Fortune still favors me, for I was put on the second relief, and have only to stand two hours in the night, viz: from 11 to 1. I have just been relieved, and will

Half an hour or more of leisure, which I know will be profitably employed by writing to my dear Mother, I am sitting out in the open air, a few steps from my tent and writing on our eating table. It is a beautiful night, calm, clear and cool, the twinkling stars and the bright silver moon, looking down upon our camp as peacefully, as they did upon the Chaldean shepherd, centuries past, the the gleams of the white waves of the lagoon, shining. Emerging through the chain of the thick-
et intervening, looks beautiful indeed. As I gaze upon the silver moon as she rolls along, dispensing her cheering light to millions of thankless creatures, I think that may help at this very moment. Father yourself and I am out gazing at the same beautiful luminary, and talking of the absent one, "I would, be an assurance most dear to know that at this moment some loved one were saying 'I wish he were here'."

It is rumored in camp that we will be ordered to McKee in a few days to take the place of the troops who have been there for two or three months. All the other companies except the Corinth Rifles, Hancock and the Waterford Company are on detached service, some at batteries and others at magazines, and 4 companies don't make much of a Regiment.